



**DEPARTMENT OF LABOR**

**Bureau of Labor Statistics**

**Information Collection Activities; Comment Request**

**AGENCY:** Bureau of Labor Statistics, Department of Labor.

**ACTION:** Notice of information collection; request for comment.

**SUMMARY:** The Department of Labor, as part of its continuing effort to reduce paperwork and respondent burden, conducts a pre-clearance consultation program to provide the general public and Federal agencies with an opportunity to comment on proposed and/or continuing collections of information in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995. This program helps to ensure that requested data can be provided in the desired format, reporting burden (time and financial resources) is minimized, collection instruments are clearly understood, and the impact of collection requirements on respondents can be properly assessed. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) is soliciting comments concerning the proposed extension of the International Price Program (IPP) U.S. Import and Export Price Indexes. A copy of the proposed information collection request can be obtained by contacting the individual listed below in the Addresses section of this notice.

**DATES:** Written comments must be submitted to the office listed in the Addresses section of this notice on or before [INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER PUBLICATION IN THE *FEDERAL REGISTER*] .

**ADDRESSES:** Send comments to Nora Kincaid, BLS Clearance Officer, Division of Management Systems, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Room 4080, 2 Massachusetts Avenue, N.E., Washington, DC 20212. Written comments also may be transmitted by email to [BLS\\_PRA\\_Public@bls.gov](mailto:BLS_PRA_Public@bls.gov).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Nora Kincaid, BLS Clearance Officer, at 202-691-7628 (this is not a toll free number). (See Addresses section.)

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

**I. Background**

The U.S. Import and Export Price Indexes, produced by the Bureau of Labor Statistics' International Price Program (IPP), measure price change over time for all categories of imported and exported products, as well as selected services. The IPP has produced the U.S. Import Price Indexes (MPI) continuously since 1973 and the U.S. Export Price Indexes (XPI) continuously since 1971. The Office of Management and Budget has listed the Import and Export Price Indexes (MXPI) as a Principal Federal Economic Indicator since 1982. The indexes are widely used in both the public and private sectors. The primary public sector use is the deflation of the U.S. monthly trade statistics and the quarterly estimates of U.S. Gross Domestic Product; the indexes also are used in formulating U.S. trade policy and in trade negotiations with other countries. In the private sector, uses of the Import Price Indexes include market analysis, inflation forecasting, contract escalation, and replacement cost accounting.

The MXPI are closely followed statistics, and are viewed as a key indicator of the economic environment. The U.S. Department of Commerce uses the monthly statistics to produce monthly and quarterly estimates of inflation-adjusted trade flows. Without continuation of data collection, it would be extremely difficult to construct accurate estimates of the U.S. Gross Domestic Product. In fact, a budget proposal to curtail publication of the export price indexes beginning in FY15 was met with resistance from the Commerce Department who explained that a viable substitute is not available. The *Beyond the Numbers* article "Analyzing alternatives to export price indexes" (<http://www.bls.gov/opub/btn/volume-3/analyzing-alternatives-to-export-price-indexes.htm>) explores alternatives to using BLS' export price indexes to deflate the U.S. Gross Domestic Product and explains why there are currently no comparable replacements.

Additionally, Federal policymakers in the Department of Treasury, the Council of Economic Advisers, and the Federal Reserve Board utilize these statistics on a regular basis to improve these agencies' formulation and evaluation of monetary and fiscal policy and evaluation of the general business environment.

## **II. Current Action**

Office of Management and Budget clearance is being sought for the U.S. Import and Export Price Indexes. The IPP continues to modernize data collection and processing to permit more timely release of its indexes, and to reduce

reporter burden. The IPP has expanded the use of its web application, introduced in 2003, and in 2018, it replaced the mail out and fax back of paper forms as IPP's primary repricing method. The web application allows respondents to update their data online and more rapidly than using a paper-based form. As of September 2021, 93 percent of IPP respondents were providing prices via the web application or had agreed to start using this repricing method.

Respondents who provide price information using non-web options do so via non-automated telephone, special arrangements between the analysts and respondents, or e-mail.

The IPP has implemented several systems changes over the years in order to reduce burden for web respondents. Most recently, the IPP adopted the use of a new web application format/layout (deployed in 2019). Previously, the web survey used separate pages for each part of the repricing process; now, the web application utilizes modal windows in combination with separate pages.

Of particular note, the Program has been conducting research into whether administrative trade data can be used in place of directly collected price data for more homogenous product areas. As part of this effort, IPP published historical research export unit value price indexes calculated using trade transaction data. Should IPP's research efforts result in the replacement of directly collected data with trade data collected by other government agencies, the Program would achieve a milestone

in burden reduction. More details are available on the MXP Research page (<https://www.bls.gov/mxp/data/research.htm>).

### **III. Desired Focus of Comments**

The Bureau of Labor Statistics is particularly interested in comments that:

- Evaluate whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility.
- Evaluate the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used.
- Enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected.
- Minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g., permitting electronic submissions of responses.

*Title of Collection:* International Price Program (IPP)  
U.S. Import and Export Price Indexes.

*OMB Number:* 1220-0025

*Type of Review:* Extension without change of a currently approved collection.

Affected Public: Private Sector, Business or other for-profits.

Form	Total Respondents	Frequency	Total Responses	Average Time per Response (hours)	Estimated Total Burden Hours
Form 3008		Annually			
Imports	1300		1300	1.0	1300
Exports	900		900	1.0	900
<b>Total</b>	2200		2200		2200
Repricing Form		Monthly			
Imports	2350	8.9 <sup>1</sup>	20915	.4683 <sup>2</sup>	9794
Exports	1500	9.1 <sup>1</sup>	13650	.4277 <sup>3</sup>	5838
<b>Total</b>	3850		34565		15632
<b>TOTALS</b>	////////	////////	36765	////////	17832

<sup>1</sup> During initiation, the respondent determines how many months he/she will need to supply data in a given year based upon how often the company changes its pricing information. The average company is requested to supply information 9.1 months per year for exports and 8.9 months per year for imports.

<sup>2</sup> Time to reprice is based upon 5 minutes of response time per item x 5.620 items = 28.100 minutes/60 = .4683 hours.

<sup>3</sup> Time to reprice is based upon 5 minutes of response time per item x 5.132 items = 25.660 minutes/60 = .4277 hours.

Comments submitted in response to this notice will be summarized and/or included in the request for Office of Management and Budget approval of the information collection request; they also will become a matter of

public record.

Signed at Washington, D.C., on this 27th day of October  
2021.

**Eric Molina,**

*Acting Chief, Division of Management Systems.*

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